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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 NEW DELHI 005382

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [ASEC](#) [IN](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: DELHI WORRIED ABOUT SPIKE IN TERRORISM, THREATS,
AND CHATTER FROM PAKISTAN

REF: A. NEW DELHI 5226

[B](#). CHENNAI 1582

[C](#). NEW DELHI 5165

[D](#). NEW DELHI 4689

[E](#). NEW DELHI 4449

Classified By: Charge Bob Blake, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Indian concerns over possible spectacular terrorist incidents are escalating, based on the recent London and Ayodhya attacks, widespread speculation on what high-profile target might be next, and a significant uptick in terrorism reporting in the Indian media, most of which points to Pakistan. Although we are not aware of any specific credible evidence pointing to a pending terror attack in New Delhi, there is a palpable feeling here that India may face more attacks of terrorism, coupled with frustration over cross-border terrorism activity in Pakistan. Reported infiltration numbers are rising dramatically -- the Indian Army on July 12 intercepted the largest group of infiltrators it has seen since the start of Indo-Pak rapprochement -- and terrorists are exploiting multiple routes to enter India. Recent media reports claim that the number of attacks in Delhi is above last year's and predicted to rise, although the number of successful attacks nationally is within normal parameters, according to Indian terrorism experts. The London subway bombings followed by days the opening of a large Metro station located in the heart of Delhi's commercial area, and has been the focus of inevitable speculation that terrorists will attack it. Indians also complain that accused Bombay bomber Dawood Ibrahim is openly arranging his daughter's Dubai wedding from Pakistan -- underlining the point that the Pakistani establishment continues to use terror as an instrument of state policy. End Summary.

India On Alert

[1](#)2. (C) In the wake of the London subway bombings, the Ayodhya temple attack, and other recent terrorist incidents, the GOI is publicly calling on its police and paramilitary forces to bolster security on a nation-wide basis. Home Minister Shivraj Patil on July 12 chaired a senior-level security review that brought together NSA MK Narayanan, RAW chief PK Tharakan, Intelligence Bureau chief ESL Narasimhan, the directors general for military operations and military intelligence, and the heads of India's paramilitary forces. Consulate Mumbai reports that police no longer permit vehicles to park near the city's two major temple complexes. The Hanuman Temple in Central Delhi is also under heavier guard.

Infiltration On the Rise

[1](#)3. (C) GOI Interlocutor on Kashmir NN Vohra on July 12 told us "several thousand" terrorists are planning to cross from Pakistan into India using a variety of routes, including J&K, Punjab, Rajasthan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, according to Indian intercepts of terrorist communications. Vohra asserted that "90% of major terrorist incidents are tied to events" such as the PM's trip and the Kashmiri separatists' June visit to Pakistan (Ref D). Also on July 12, Indian troops in J&K reportedly engaged some 35 terrorists as they tried to infiltrate across the LoC, the largest such encounter since the start of Indo-Pak rapprochement. Against this backdrop, Foreign Minister Natwar Singh has been reiterating his "offer" to provide Pakistan PM Shaukat Aziz with "photographic evidence" of terrorist camps (Ref C). An RSO contact told us that several Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) cells that entered India in March remain at large; he predicted they would hit soft targets some time this summer.

Terrorism Metrics Yield Complex and Ominous Picture

[1](#)4. (C) New Delhi-based terrorism expert Ajai Sahni told Poloff that the recent spate of attacks does not represent a national uptick in terrorist violence, but added that he would not be surprised if attacks continue to the point of being statistically significant. "We always have a few major attacks outside J&K every year. Bearing that in mind, the

situation so far remains consistent with the trend since 2000," Sahni explained. According to his research, this trend is independent of the state of Indo-Pak relations, although he contended that "strategically, Islamabad is calling all the shots, in Punjab, in the Northeast, throughout the country ... and nothing will change it until Musharraf makes a strategic shift in Pakistani support for terrorism." Sahni said that better security in J&K over the past year may be pushing terrorists into other regions that are "easier to operate in," which could produce a spike in attacks outside J&K.

15. (U) Much of this terrorism is indigenous. For example, in the last week alone:

-- Five Andhra Pradesh state ministers resigned, reportedly because of threats from the Communist Party of India (Maoist), i.e. Naxalites (Ref B).

-- Naxals in West Bengal shot dead three senior Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) members, and killed one police officer and injured 16 more in a separate bomb attack.

-- Naga rebels torched at least 17 government buildings in Manipur.

16. (C) Terrorist activity in New Delhi itself has spiked over last year, according to published reports. The May 22 cinema bombings by Babar Khalsa International (BKI) terrorists were the first spectacular attacks in Delhi in three years (Ref E). Police report that 40 terrorists have been arrested or killed in Delhi in the first half of 2005, compared with seven in 2004, although it is commonly held that some of these "encounters" are staged. Reportedly hundreds of police raids have failed to produce LeT's head of operations for northern India.

London Bombings Put Delhi Metro on Notice

17. (C) The London transit system terrorist bombings have focused New Delhi's attention on its own expanding subway; however, Delhi was ramping up security even before the London attacks. RSO police contacts confirmed that the Metro is on its highest alert level, and a former Indian Police Service officer told Poloff that Metro officials believe a station may be attacked in the next few weeks.

18. (U) Metro officials publicly reiterated the subway system's safety features after opening Connaught Place Station, a huge venue located in a busy shopping and commercial area. They reported that employees are trained in fire safety, and emergency protocols include a modern fire suppression system and high-speed reversible-flow fans to rapidly expel smoke. The Metro is staffed by a mix of 550 private guards, Delhi Police, and Central Reserve Police Force units. (NOTE: CRPF troops successfully repelled the July 5 Ayodhya attack. End Note.) Their numbers are doubling with the addition of two companies of Delhi Armed Police, extra female security officers, and bomb-detection dogs, and the Home Ministry recently created a task force to conduct a top-to-bottom security review of the Metro network. However, "Times of India" and "Hindustan Times" reporters recently published "sting" articles on security lapses at Metro and commuter rail stations, including police not frisking passengers who set off metal detectors.

Forensics Improve, Plots Disrupted, But Convictions Lag

19. (C) Indian security agencies are able to track down terrorists after an attack more quickly than they could before. NDTV Security Correspondent Col. (ret.) Ajai Shukla pointed to the analysis of mobile telephone calls that helped both the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh police identify suspects quickly in the cinema and Ayodhya attacks. One national intelligence unit tasked to counter Islamic terrorist cells outside J&K reports that it has disrupted on average one group per week for the past seven years (cell size not specified). For the first half of 2005, they report having "identified and neutralized" suspected terrorists in Delhi, West Bengal, Uttaranchal, Mumbai, Bihar, Meghalaya, and Rajasthan.

10. (U) Other security agencies are also showing increased success in disrupting planned terrorist attacks and supply chains. For example, Delhi police said they foiled a July 2 attempt by four suspected terrorists to attack Palam Air Force Station. The men were arrested with a hand grenade, firearms, a map of the air base, and over USD 1,000 in counterfeit currency. Separately, a suspended J&K police officer in mid-June reportedly sent 40 wireless sets, antennae of various frequencies, and a Thuraya satellite phone from Jeddah to Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi. This consignment, which was concealed in a package of carpets, was seized by Customs officers at the airport along

with an accomplice on June 15. Delhi Police Commissioner Paul said that the equipment was probably bound for terrorists operating in Kashmir.

11. (C) Despite these successes, many police officers still fail to gather sufficient credible evidence to secure convictions. "Some of the Babar Khalsa guys will walk, many of the LeT cadres do, because the police botch the evidence. The worst thing would be if Pakistan gave us those 20 Most Wanted that the BJP government wanted a few years ago; even Dawood Ibrahim would probably walk free," Ajai Sahni told Poloff. In the Kulvir Barapind case, the evidence against an alleged Khalistani terrorist currently in US custody is so weak that it is based on unsigned translated depositions that witnesses later recanted.

Babar Khalsa Reactivated by Pakistan?

12. (C) The BKi terrorists who were arrested for the May 22 cinema bombings fingered their accomplices, and arrests are mounting. A Delhi Police Special Cell unit on July 5 captured three suspected BKi weapons suppliers in Jammu, reportedly based on information provided by one of the cinema bombers. They arrested the traffickers after they had received 2.5 kg of RDX and ten detonators. Several suspected BKi suicide bombers have also been captured by police in June and early July. However, because the group has already augmented its numbers with "hired muscle" and may retain stockpiles of arms and explosives from years of inactivity, it is difficult to assess their numbers and capabilities, according to Sahni. Indian intelligence believes that Islamabad is "reactivating" Khalistan-oriented terrorist with "fresh infusions" of money and arms, according to well-connected "Times of India" Foreign Affairs correspondent Indrani Bagchi, but Sahni and our Punjab contacts agree that Indian Sikhs are no longer sympathetic toward Khalistan-inspired political violence.

Ayodhya Investigation Progressing, Security Gaps Remain

13. (C) Indian security officials are keeping a close hold on the progress of the Ayodhya investigation, but law enforcement sources are saying off the record that:

-- Police have arrested several former Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) members from Faizabad, six km from Ayodhya, in connection with the attack.

-- Investigators reportedly traced some of the terrorists' 50-plus cell phone calls made on the day of the attack to public phones in New Delhi.

-- A person who is said to have web-chatted with one of the terrorists is being questioned by police.

14. (C) MEA Joint Secretary (Nepal) Ranjit Rae told PolCouns that New Delhi was closely tracking the nexus between terrorism in India and Nepal's open border. He said New Delhi has increased scrutiny of Kathmandu after the 2000 IC-814 hijacking and expressed concern about ISI activities in the Terai region, including explosives smuggling and counterfeiting. He added that Nepal's connection to the Ayodhya attack remains under investigation.

Police: Terror Chatter Foreshadows "Something Big"

15. (C) Despite widespread media reporting that the BKi bombers were located by tracing their cell phone activity, the "Times of India" on July 6 reported that LeT "chatter" in the weeks preceding the Ayodhya attack seemed to indicate that cells in India were being egged on to attack "something big." Former RAW Additional Secretary B Raman recently speculated that al-Qa'ida affiliated jihadi web sites (presumably LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammad) "have seen chatter critical of India's close relations with the US" and may spur on terrorist attacks, although he mentioned no specific information in this regard.

Peace Process to Continue: London the New Threshold

16. (U) Maintaining the measured tone that the PM set immediately after Ayodhya (Ref A), Home Minister Patil on July 10 announced that the GOI would not allow that attack to derail Indo-Pak rapprochement. Patil was in Srinagar at the time, surveying security arrangements for the annual Armanath pilgrimage, which is usually a terrorist target. Foreign Minister Natwar Singh the next day said that New Delhi would continue talks with Islamabad "unless there is a terrorist attack like the one witnessed in London," a higher threshold than the one set by the PM immediately after the attack.

Celebrity Terrorist Wedding

117. (C) Specially Designated Global Terrorist Dawood Ibrahim, in addition to being on the BJP's "List of 20" wanted terrorists, is the father of the bride in this summer's most anticipated South Asia wedding, speculated to take place either in Mecca or Dubai. Ibrahim's daughter is to wed the son of Pakistani cricketer Javed Miandad in an upcoming ceremony that has captured front-page news coverage. Indian commentators have predicted that Ibrahim may attend the high-profile wedding in a burkah to elude Indian law enforcement. News of the wedding has resurrected stories of the 1993 Mumbai bombings and his connections to LeT, stirring Indian anguish about Dawood's alleged protected status in Pakistan. Former Principal Secretary Naresh Chandra recently cited this to us as one of several factors contributing to deepening GOI frustration about Pakistan's support for terrorism and Washington's perceived willingness to excuse these activities.

Future Targets -----

118. (C) If the goal of terrorists operating in northern India is to try to inflame existing societal faultlines, future targets would likely include other religious sites. For example, the Armanath pilgrimage in J&K, now in progress, attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. A 2002 attack on pilgrims left eight dead and over 30 injured. Security around other religious sites has reportedly been tightened, however, and the Ayodhya attack failed to spark any communal backlash. A similar target in the realm of politics could be BJP or RSS headquarters; an attack there could exacerbate the current political backbiting between the Government and the Opposition over the Ayodhya attack and other security issues.

119. (C) Former Home Secretary Vohra told us recently that, based on GOI data, likely targets include the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun (which was targeted by an LeT cell that police intercepted in March) as well as J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and his daughter, PDP President Mehbooba Mufti. "Hindustan Times" terrorism journalist Rajnish Sharma reported that several key economic and infrastructure sites are also under high alert. These include the Bhabha Atomic Research Center (BARC) and other nuclear sites, petroleum refineries, and stock exchanges. The Archeological Survey of India, which is responsible for heritage sites, recently noted that security was deficient at the Red Fort (which terrorists attacked in December 2000 and a frequent site of terrorist threats) and the Qutab Minar,

120. (C) Sahni lamented that, because "literally tons of materiel are pre-positioned throughout the country, terrorist cells can attack a target of opportunity within fairly broad parameters" despite police having seized hundreds of pounds of explosives and firearms in a series of raids against terrorist cells across northern India in recent weeks. For example, the BKI cell probably chose the movie theaters to take advantage of the controversy surrounding the film showing there. Ayodhya "was probably one of several religious targets that particular group could choose from." The interesting thing to note, Sahni added, was the target selection and modus operandi in both these attacks emphasized symbolism and exploiting political divisiveness over causing mass casualties. He would not speculate that the groups were actively trying to minimize fatalities, only that it was not their primary goal.

Comment: Bracing for the PM's Visit -----

121. (C) Whether by design or chance, the terrorist team that attacked Ayodhya did so on the eve of the PM's trip to the G-8 Summit. LeT and other terrorist groups will view the PM's July 17 trip to Washington as the prime symbol of the growing Indo-US relationship. Although there have been no reported specific terror alerts in New Delhi, the White House meeting will provide a tempting opportunity for a spectacular attack and a symbolic connection that could politically outweigh Ayodhya. Delhiites who recently celebrated the opening of a new Metro station at Connaught Place cannot help but wonder if terrorists are eyeing it, or other parts of their city, as a future target. Concern appears highest in the capital, but potential targets exist throughout the country, and this is combining with new reports of terrorist training facilities in Pakistan -- and evidence of renewed infiltration -- to provoke mounting frustration about Musharraf's perceived unwillingness to make good on his repeated promises to end all terrorism against India. Mission India EACs will remain alert to any new threats and be prepared to respond quickly.

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